Metrics

Metrics History in the United States

In 1821, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams told the U.S. Congress that our country should use the metric system. Not until 1866, however, did Congress make the use of the metric system legal in our country. Since that time, metrics have been used more and more (Metric System 3). People in medicine and science were among the first in our country to use metrics.

In 1971, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce urged our country to change to the metric system. He suggested we use a ten-year voluntary plan to do this. Four years later, President Gerald R. Ford signed the Metric Conversion Act. This act defined the metric system as being the International System of Units as interpreted in the United States by the Secretary of Commerce. The act helped the metric effort, but did not include a conversion schedule (Metric System 3). Today metrics are everywhere in our country! Track and feild distances, heights, an weights are now measured in metrics. Car engines and and soft drink container sizes are stated in metrics. the size of film and teh nutrition information listed food packages are given in metric units. The size of the nuts, bolts, and screws that hold are products together are other examples of common items that are measured in metric unit. there are many other examples as well.

Metric Basics

The metric system is based on units of 10. Some people think that this makes the metric system easier to use than the English system.

Units smaller than a meter have Latin prefixes: deci- means 10; centi- means 100; milli- means 1,000. Units larger than a meter have Greek prefixes. Deka- means 10; a dekameter is 10 meters. Hecto- means 100; a hectometer is 100 meters. Kilo- means 1,000; a kilometer is 1,000 meters (Measuring Metric 1)